arrowcord
annual

October 2025
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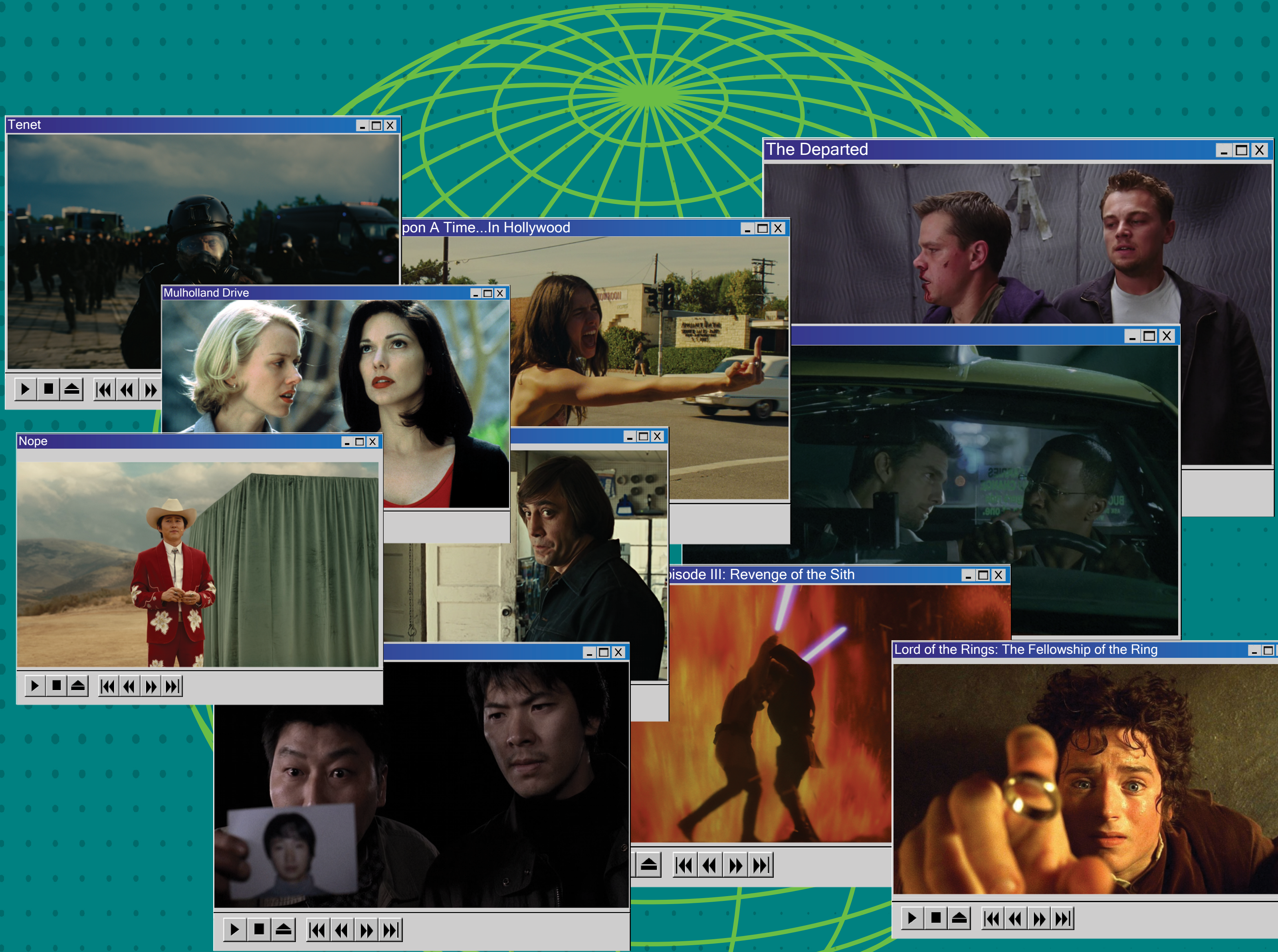
The Results Are In

The Greatest Films of the 21st Century, voted by **you.**


Tenet
pon A Time...In Hollywood
Mulholland Drive
The Departed
Nope
isode III: Revenge of the Sith
Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring

Arrowcord Presents

arrowcord annual

October 2025

Written by...you!

The End is Inevitable. Your Kind is Headed for Extinction.

I became familiar with the people of Arrowcord around late 2020, and now I'm not even sure how true that is. Back then, it was just "The Criterion Collection Discord Server", a name associated with a completely different server nowadays. I very much was what you'd call a lurker, just someone who'd look at it every now and then, and thought it was cool there was a channel where people traded MEGA links to obscure movies frequently.

My memory has been a failure pretty much my entire life and the space I reserve for conversations on the internet shrinks every day, so I couldn't tell you what I posted there, but I wouldn't consider myself incredibly active. When I join a new digital platform of people to socialize with, I tend to make a quiet and rather underwhelming first impression. In fact the only things I firmly remember about this era was getting kicked from the server's group watch of a movie after saying I'd be interested, and even then I couldn't tell you what movie it was.

On April 23rd, 2021, I get a message from the head admin of the Criterion discord named Panzer. Most of the active users have split and formed a new server, using the best name you could think of. The funny thing is, even being part of Arrowcord's past four years of existence, using it as a platform to socialize, shitpost, and curate ideas, to this day I don't own a single Arrow Video disc.

It's easy to say this for any era, but the past twenty-five years of cinema is unlike any other. Digital cameras are becoming more than found footage gimmicks, Disney starts buying up companies left and right to build an IP empire, the Chinese box office becomes a carrot on a stick for American movie studios for about four years, and the WGA and SAG-AFTRA unions would band together on strike for the first time since 1960. Most notable of all, the tech industry began to leave a footprint that would shape the future of Hollywood productions, for better or for worse. Lots of directors from the end of the previous century would go onto make some of their most acclaimed and successful work in this one: Michael Mann, Kathryn Bigelow, Paul Thomas Anderson, Danny Boyle, Tony Scott, David Lynch, David Fincher, Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuarón, The Coen Brothers, Martin Scorsese, Quentin Tarentino, and Sam Raimi, just to name a few. New names such as Bong Joon-Ho, Jordan Peele, Christopher Nolan, Ari Aster, Greta Gerwig, Ryusuke Hamaguchi, J.J. Abrams, Noah Baumbach, Steve McQueen, Jane Schoenbrun, Christopher McQuarrie, Denis Villeneuve, and Barry Jenkins would become the landmark directors behind an artform that was sifting in a world of great uncertainty. Some would surrender to the perfect data points that indicate success, others would wear their imperfections on their sleeves, delivering powerful stories that would share their vulnerabilities with the connected world.

Though where some things began, others would end. A year before I was born, *Titanic* was released into theaters across the globe. It was a romantic drama about one of the manmade disasters, rich of love and irony. It made almost two billion dollars when it came out, cemented Leonard DiCaprio as a high demand movie star. It's an era that I can only speculate about. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, movie theaters took a huge hit, and film productions shut down immediately, setting in a stage of recovery to prior numbers that we're still in today. With the large amount of online streaming services available to the general public, carrying an everchanging and expansive library of films and television, the future of the industry was very uncertain. The big movies that had been financially successful weren't Titanic, they were franchise movies. Sequels, remakes, reboots, spin-offs, a lot of rehashings for generations that longed for their simple childhoods. The situation was worsening towards the end of 2021 when the glimmer of hope that theaters aren't totally dead yet was that *Spider-Man: No Way Home* was becoming a successful movie that could match pre-COVID box office levels as the world began to exit the global pandemic mindset. On top of an output that was uninspired at best, Spider-Man was only one movie. It was becoming normal to stay indoors as much as possible, could movie theaters survive something as destructive as that?

I found out the answer in July 2023. Two highly anticipated films were getting released on the same weekend: *Oppenheimer* and *Barbie.* Yes, one was a movie for a fucking doll, obviously that isn't a soul-seeking script that's going to really puncture someone's heart, but the other was a biopic by a beloved and very ambitious director, which isn't as marketable as I'm sure a movie studio would like it to be. They could not be more different films, which helped them in a way. There wasn't a lot of overlap of audience between Barbie and Oppenheimer, so it didn't feel like a fight, just people attending the respective movies they were most interested in seeing. With Christopher Nolan and Greta Gerwig being the names behind these movies, these movies were going to be a success no matter what.

On a Saturday afternoon, I took a bus ride from Downtown Portland into the Northeast area of the city where I live. Along the route is one of the local Regal Cinemas. This one specifically was at one point, the Regal theater with the highest volume of attendance in the entire Pacific Northwest, and back in 2018 the property owner wanted to rebuild the theater, going from a ten screen building to a fourteen screen one. Unfortunately the plans fell through, the ten screen theater is still there, along with a really big parking lot that's been fenced off to this day. As the bus was passing by this recently derelict establishment, I quickly lifted my head up out of curiosity. The theater wasn't just occupied, it was packed with moviegoers. It wasn't the lines you'd see for something like *Star Wars,* going out the door and around the block, but I could tell by the pink shirts being worn for *Barbie* that people were excited to experience cinema again.

I got a second part to this response two weeks later, when I went to the movies myself. I saw *Oppenheimer* on the second weekend of it's release and it became an instant favorite. So much so that only a week later, I felt the need to see it again as soon as possible. The first time I went, the theater was packed with a full house. When the movie ended and I left, I could see a line was already forming outside for the next screening, all for a three-hour courtroom drama. The second screening I picked was on a Thursday evening three weeks after the movie premiered. I figured based on that metric, this was going to be a pretty chill screening, some people would pop up, but the people who really wanted to watch Christopher Nolan's *Oppenheimer* did so already. I show up, and it's a completely packed showing. Again.

The demand is there, whether driven by escapism or desire to see spectacle, I've never been more convinced that this is one of the best artforms to ever exist. Even when we are faced with troubling news of box office bombs, production strikes, and layoffs. Every day the tech industry continues to push out lovers of the medium that wish to see it thrive, telling us now that AI is here we'll have to get a "real job."

Uncertainty in Hollywood's future remains current. The tech giants that dominate the United States could very much pull the rug out from under, burn every film canister in the country and launch a half-functional AI program that can direct movies in ten minutes which will finally end the gatekeeping from those pesky artsy-fartsy real filmmakers. Yet every day, I'm reminded how much people love this medium. Whether it's a packed theater for an autuer venture or a Discord server unofficially named after boutique label. In our times of doubt, one way or another, for the next seventy-five years we will all find the courage to carry the words of legendary Top Gun graduate Pete 'Maverick' Mitchell:

"Maybe so, sir. But not today."

-lulzy

After months of careful calculations and exciting submissions,
the moment you've been waiting for…

is finally here.

Arrowcord's Top 50 Films of the 21st Century

Honorable Mentions

With 31 submissions ranging from 364 selected films, there was never going to be a simple answer on what is the best of the best. Along with submitting a list of their favorite films from this century, we provided voters the opportunity to do a write-up on a film that really speaks to them.

While these films did not make the top 50, the words backing them are just as important.

Goodbye Dragon Inn

Tsai Ming-liang, 2003

Anatomy of a Movie Theatre

by tristan

Tsai Ming-Liang is a director who has long been fascinated by spaces. Like many of his Taiwan New Wave contemporaries (such as Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien), his films often center around urban life in Taiwan and the shifts in the country's culture following the lifting of decades-long martial law. Unlike his colleagues, however, Tsai has always had a unique obsession with how the places we inhabit shift our perspective on life in unpredictable yet meaningful ways. Whether it's a group of complete strangers managing to unknowingly, and simultaneously, share the same apartment (Vive L'amour), or two seemingly desolate neighbors finding connection through a plumbing mishap (The Hole), his films highlight the absurd reality of experiencing deep solitude in an increasingly interlinked modern world. With this intersection of human connection and isolating environments in mind, it comes as little surprise that his attention would soon turn towards the very spaces that people experience his cinematic visions through: the movie theatre.

Movie-going is an inherently paradoxical experience. At its core, it's an act of collective individualism; a crowd of strangers stroll into a dark room and together they watch the same film yet each walk away with their own wholly unique perspectives.

Goodbye Dragon, Inn dissects these ideas through the tale of a grand theatre's final showing before its doors close forever, and it becomes clear that Tsai is just as fascinated with the building itself as he is with the strange denizens who wander through its storied halls.

The slow, meandering exploration of the theatre's many hallways, stairwells, backrooms, and bathrooms, urges the viewer to really meditate on the magnificence of experiencing art collectively. Each member of the audience comes bearing their own experiences and rituals, and some might not even be there to watch the film at all, but their presence informs the viewing experience for the entire crowd as they sit together in the cavernous auditorium. By the time the credits roll for Hu's Dragon Inn, it's hard not to have developed an attachment for a place that many will never even visit. We've seen its innards, its beating heart, and what starts as a love letter to the idea of movie-going (and existing in that strange limbo between the individual and the whole) begins to twist into a eulogy for a cultural experience that seems to be increasingly devalued as we get further and further into the 21st century.

Batman vs. Superman: Dawn of Justice

Zack Snyder, 2016

A Beautiful Lie

by Queen

The modern superhero film has long since been content to aim for being as safe as possible, reliant on fanservice and reference to the source material to carry them through to the finish line with little controversy. What makes *Batman v Superman* remarkable by comparison is that it is interested in interrogating the genre more than just celebrating it. The actions of Superman and Batman are both called into question and examined as reflective of America's own thoughts. Reversing The Dark Knight Returns and casting Batman as the villain as him and fellow billionaire Lex Luthor target an immigrant with a working class background was a genius twist. The mirror of Batman reflecting post-9/11 hysteria and even quoting Dick Cheney is not something that was supposed to happen in the set up of a major blockbuster franchise that would eventually support neverending sequels and spinoff films. Yet, by the time Batman has discovered Lex keeping track of metahumans and has created logos for each of them to turn into his own superteam the satirical bent to the DCEU is fully coming into focus. We will likely never know where this and the following Zack Snyder's *Justice League* would have led us in the end, but it's a hell of a prologue to what could have been. Also they tricked Neil DeGrasse Tyson to go on camera and debate "The Superman Question" what's not to love here?

Déjà Vu

Tony Scott,
2006

“What if you had to tell someone the most important thing in the world, but you knew they’d never believe you?”

by lulzy

Quite possibly the most underrated science fiction film of the 2000s, *Déjà Vu* does a lot of things well, but the thing that pushes it over the edge into ‘Holy Shit This is Cool’ levels is the confidence it has both in its story and its audience. Like *One Cut of the Dead*, the fun in this movie is finding abnormalities, odd and inexplicable details that aren’t compatible with each other and often contradict earlier scenes. In another movie, these details might be seen as an oversight from a director, but in *Déjà Vu’s* case, Tony Scott wants you to find them.

Scott brings his visual craft of making every movie of his like a music video (Lots of slow-motion, sped up footage, and flashing title graphics that are very much a product of the ever-evolving 2000s) into a unique crime thriller with time travel, government surveillance, and an engaging romance. There are many components to *Déjà Vu* that are grounded in the reality that created this movie: using a terrorist bombing as the center of its conflict, the usage of New Orleans as a location only a year after Hurricane Katrina. All of which contribute to an idea that this is not a story based around science fiction but “science fact.” Yet by the end, you get a movie that’s triumphant in spirit, showing that the grim reality forged by the sins of the past can never really stop a desire to save a future.

“I’d try.”

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Noroi The Curse
Koji Shiraishi,
2005

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Lord of the Rings:
The Fellowship
of the Ring
Peter Jackson, 2001

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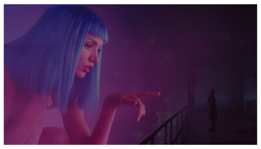
The Social Network
David Fincher,
2010

47.
Mad Max: Fury Ro
George Miller,
2017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Blade Runner 2049
Denis Villeneuve,
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Killers of the Flower Moon
Martin Scorsese,
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Oppenheimer
Christopher Nolan,
2023

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Inglourious Basterds
Quentin Tarentino,
2009

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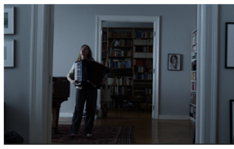
Inherent Vice
Paul Thomas Anderson,
2014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TÁR
Todd Field,
2022

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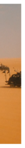

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Drive
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Inside Llewyn Davis
The Coen Brothers,
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Inland Empire
David Lynch,
2006

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Lord of the Rings:
The Return of the King
Peter Jackson,
2004

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The Piano Teacher
Michael Haneke,
2001

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Irreversible
Gaspar Noé,
2002

47.

Mad Max: Fury Road

George Miller, 2015

The Future Belongs to the Mad

by Smilingbandit2

As legend has it, The story for *Mad Max: Fury Road* came to George Miller in 1987 in a fever dream, and he spent nearly thirty years trying to get it made. Normally, this is a recipe for disaster - there's a long history of 'auteur passion projects' that end in failure and disgrace. But despite decades of development hell, terrorist attacks and natural disasters, George Miller created one of the greatest action films ever made, a world of blood and fire that stomps on the gas and never lets up.

Fury Road gets so much right that it's hard to list everything in a few paragraphs, but first on that list is the cinematography. George Miller told John Seale to keep the action dead center in the frame, no matter what. This simple rule means that the film remains totally comprehensible at all times, even as the action sequences frantically cut from one speed-ramped shot to another.

That's really important, because this movie is about 90% action by volume. The first chase sequence starts less than 90 seconds into the film, and from there the pace is unrelenting. There's a few minutes of table-setting at the beginning, and a few quiet minutes between set pieces for character development, but otherwise it's all action all the time.

There's also a depth to the characters that you rarely find in action movies this bombastic. The three main characters (Max, Furiosa and Nux) are all incredibly written and incredibly acted, but even the villains and sidekicks are given dimensionality. The most striking example is Rictus, Immortan Joe's giant mutant son. He's a brute and an idiot, equal parts monster and comic relief. But when the baby dies in the back of Joe's truck, he's filled with grief at losing a brother.

A lesser film would skip these minor details to save time, but George Miller cut no corners when he made his masterpiece. You see the effort and attention to detail in every set, prop, vehicle and line of dialogue. It feels like a movie that would take thirty years to create, like there's a thousand page long post-apocalyptic Silmarillion written down somewhere, waiting to be published. It's a whole universe, folded like origami into the greatest ninety minutes of action ever put to film.

31.

The Piano Teacher

Michael Haneke,
2001

Good Movie to Watch With Your Mother

by Logan

It's hard to find a film that makes the viewer as uncomfortable as *The Piano Teacher* does, but Michael Haneke's 2001 film based on the novel by Elfriede Jelinek manages to both horrify and captivate. Isabelle Hupper gives the performance of a lifetime as the deeply repressed and confused Erika, as she navigates a relationship with her new Piano student (Benoît Magimel) and her domineering mother (Annie Girardot). The film is ripe for analysis on topics like power dynamics, sexual repression and abusive relationships. Every aspect, from the diegetic classical music score, the perfectly crafted long takes, and the devastating story that slowly reveals itself all contribute to a perfect film that I think is one of the best of the 21st century.

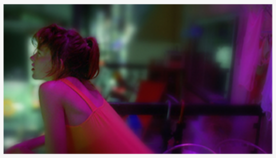
The Piano Teacher

Arrowcord Top Films of the 21st Century

29-11

29.
Oldboy
Park Chan-Wook,
2003

28.
Mysterious Skin
Gregg Araki,
2003



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Enter the Void
Gaspar Noe,
2009

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Punch-Dru
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Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
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Spring Breakers
Harmony Korine,
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2009

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The Lighthouse
Robert Eggers,
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Before Sunset
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Pulse
Kiyoshi Kurosawa,
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The Royal Tenenbaums
Wes Anderson,
2001

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Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith
George Lucas,
2005

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Anderson,
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11.
A.I. Artifical Intelligence
Steven Spielberg
2001

27.

Enter The Void

Gaspar Noé, 2009

void: entered.

by sander

What is a drug? LSD is a drug. Marijuana is a drug. Cocaine is a drug. Heroin is a drug. Mushrooms is a drug. Alcohol is a drug. PCP is a drug. Speed is a drug. But is a movie a drug? Could it be? If ever there was a movie that could be qualified as a drug it would be *Enter the Void* (2009). The Oxford dictionary defines a drug as "a medicine or other substance which has a physiological effect when ingested or otherwise introduced into the body." *Enter the Void* has a physiological effect on me (it makes me sad and freaked out) when introduced to my body (looked at by my eyes and listened to by my ears). But is a movie a substance? Yes, in a way. The movie *The Substance* (2024) is a film in which a titular Substance, when taken, creates another human vessel for the mind to occupy which is younger and better this eventually causes a multitude of issues for the main character, but *The Substance* isn't the subject of this essay. This movie is certainly a Substance, but is Enter the Void a substance? It isn't The Substance. For one thing, it is a better movie, and it was not directed by a Woman. Although, on another hand, many women were involved in the making of the film. Paz de la Huerta. Others. This, however, does not inherently make the film a substance.

One thing to take into account is that Enter the Void was shot on 16mm and 35mm film, giving it indisputable substance. I could hold the celluloid that this film was shot on in my hand. It is substantive in the most literal way. I could eat it if I wanted to. However, with the influx of digital mastering in the 2000s, this movie was mastered digitally in 2K, meaning that it is a digital file, first and foremost. Film prints can be made, but they will never be the definitive version. If I were to take a picture taken on my Google Pixel 4a and print it off on my Brother Wireless HL-L2405W Compact Monochrome Laser Printer, would that make the digital photograph a substance? I wouldn't say so. However, there are more factors to be taken into account. *The Substance* (2024) was shot digitally on Arri Alexa Mini LF cameras, making it a quintessentially digital film, and yet, it is Substance. How can we account for this discrepancy?

Another perspective can be gained from the Reddit post: "What are some directors that you consider style over substance? I'll start. (I apologize for deleting the original post)"According to user Super-Objective-1241, a film can lose substance by focusing too much on style, the director's attempt to display their differences from the rest of the film community through audio or visual quirks. Enter the Void is a film which is told almost entirely from the perspective of a dead man, floating insubstantially through the world of the living. The camera flies through walls, across busy streets, and into the private parts of unsuspecting individuals. It is a film with undeniable visual flair, in other words, style. Does the presence of such style disqualify this film from being a substance, and thus, a drug? We can see an opposing viewpoint from Reddit user ColorMatchUrButthole who says "Style IS substance", which, if true, could be the damning evidence which answers our whole question

Is *Enter the Void* (2009) a substance? Well, is *Enter the Void* (2009) style? I, for one, would claim that yes, it is style, and therefore, it is a substance. Because of this revelation, we can finally say that *Enter the Void* is, in fact, a drug, and therefore, I cannot partake in it or my mom will be upset at me and kick me out of the basement. If she asks you if I have seen it, please say no. Tell her I watched a different movie. Thanks

ENTER
24h レンタルDVD

Enter the Void, dir. Gaspar Noé

23.
Climax

Gaspar Noé,
2018

A Fleeting Pleasure

by adam

maybe the culmination of all of noe's work before? takes the best elements of *irreversible* and enter the void and refines them into a pretty pitch perfect 90 minutes of nauseous terror. strips away a lot of the fat of the latter especially - feels like noe holding off on a lot of worst impulses. accessible but suffocating. impressively technically proficient too - (almost) everyone here is at their a-game, the camerawork is as unrelenting as its subject matter. just an incredibly confident showpiece all around. all timer title drop too.

21.
Spring Breakers

Harmony Korine,
2012

The Most Spiritual Place I’ve Ever Been

by jekk

Spring Breakers is a film that can’t be summed up in one word, but if one were to try, I think the only possible one to choose would be “artistic”. The neon lights and striking slow cinematography paint Florida beaches as a beautiful mirage of sour candy flavored blood. Detractors of the film will laugh at such an assertion, as they view the ditzy main characters and scenes of butts in bikinis shaking as crass and low-brow. However, those who see through the thin veil of the breasts and neon lights can confidently say that these elements of critique are the most artistic aspects of the film. Those who have given the film a deeper look can easily point to the satirical criticism of youth culture and American excess. However, the special thing about *Spring Breakers* and Harmony Korine in particular is that rather from a detached opposing stance, the film also seems to revel in the idea of seemingly “brain-dead” partying, drugs, and alcohol.

Polarization encompasses the film from the inside and out. Like many cult classics, it garnered the reputation of being a “love it or hate it” movie. It’s scored by the one and only Sonny “Skrillex” Moore, who dominated the early 2010’s electronic music scene and made the genre of “dubstep” a household name, much to the excitement of those like myself, and the chagrin of anyone over the age of 25. Rather than what feels like a tug of war between painting a picture of the very real violence that comes from idealized “hip-hop mysticism” and the appreciation for the very real transcendence and beauty that emerges from maximalism in American culture, the film is a beautiful song and dance that merges the two in a visual poem that even those who look at it unfaithfully as sexist slop can’t deny. This is illustrated perfectly in the most amazing scene in the whole movie, the Brittany Spears scene, which drove me to tears upon my first watch.

Beyond the standard American dream critique, a clear social commentary on race can be seen as well. From pulling a small heist to dancing with bubbles and snorting cocaine in hotels on the beach with other white college kids, the girls enter a world of drugs and guns that they subtly become uncomfortable in once they see the people who live around the beach, a predominantly black demographic, and not just tourists like them who live in a fantasy land of fun and partying in Airbnb’s and go home to continue their church services and macroeconomics classes.

Most of the violence in the film is enacted upon this group, who are seemingly just pawns to these girls whose world they stumbled into fueled by their mystic perceptions of drugs and violence, to which these same consequences are never extended upon the main cast. All of which have nice homes to return to once they feel their rose-tinted fantasy is far from the harsh reality that many marginalized groups are raised in and forced to be a part of their whole lives.

However, the film also provides a beautiful and atypical view in favor of the trashiness of the characters and their setting. Brit, Candy, Cotty, and Faith spew hard-to-stomach dialogue about sex and swears that are one-dimensional and crass. It is obvious from a criticism point of view why these archetypes are inflated so hyperbolically, but what is truly artistic to me is also the unexpected characterization that comes from it. *Spring Breakers* is just as well a story of girlhood and their embodiment of deeper feelings of freedom and transcendence through youth culture. Harmony Korine is one of the few filmmakers who recognizes the true relevance to the American human spirit that these girls embody. People whose wants and desires are cast aside as trashy by those with a more broad scope on life are put on display, even if you think it's gross. The unfiltered passion from these girls and their spirit to discover themselves on a beautiful beach in skimpy outfits is the very definition of feminist. Sex is art.

Culture is art. And whether you like it or not, *Spring Breakers* is culture. *Spring Breakers* is art.

Spring Breakers, dir. Harmony Korine

10 - 1

“It just seemed like the thing to do.”

-Jon Bois, quoting Bud Grant

10.

Zodiac

David Fincher, 2007

There's More Than One Way to Lose Your Life to a Killer

by chip

As we drift farther and farther into a ultrasmooth static future, it's worth celebrating works that can bring the jagged past into reality. Fincher's hypermanicured form creates the perfect frame in which horror is born from the mysteries of fact. It's hard to watch *Zodiac* and not fall into the picture's alluring green haze. It becomes the truth. In lesser hands, this would exist just to retell and rehash how things were never solved, but at Fincher's peak we're taken behind the scenes. We get to see the systematic failures of justice. How we were failed to be served or protected and the way that time can rinse away all sensitivity to a loss of security. *Zodiac* is undeniably Fincher's masterwork, but it also exists as counterbalance to his typical scalpel sharp style. America's underbelly is still as dark and seedy as ever. It's best not to rinse it too clean when lifting the stone.

9.

Yi Yi

Edward Yang,
2000

Everyday Effective

by kermit

One of the pinnacles of Taiwanese Cinema, Edward Yang's *Yi Yi* traces the lives of three generations of a Taiwanese family. Each of them but the youngest confronting choices laced with regrets. "Should I have married her?" "Why did we split?" "Should I go back?" These choices are not made impulsively, and often characters back out of them, drawn by what could have been but pulled back by what is. It is a film about the winds of life, where they blow us. We wonder if things would have been different if the wind had blown us a different direction, but fail to consider that perhaps they would have blown us to the same place in the end. Only the youngest takes things as they are, too innocent to have regrets.

8.

Once Upon a Time...In Hollywood

Quentin Tarentino, 2017

Baby Baby Baby You're Outta Time

by funnylittlefella

Painstaking craftsmanship. Blood, sweat, and tears all to say goodbye one last time and maybe just maybe right a couple of wrongs along the way. An oddly melancholic and wistful film from one of our most playful auteurs. While nostalgic throwbacks about Hollywood are in no short supply the characters Tarantino zeroes in on to create a lived in world. A world in which the gates of stardom can open up to an aging spaghetti western star. A world where he and his violent yet charming stuntman pal can change the history of Hollywood itself.

You get a sense of Tarantino's own childhood in the driving sequences following Cliff Booth. The amazement of the land of dreams itself blasting by at high speeds. Side by side with a story of an actor discovering his craft and evolving past his movie star image. Two stories that end up wrapped up in real history in ways you could not possibly expect. None of it should work and there is nothing quite like it. Tarantino's farewell just might be his opus as it shows a rare bleeding heart for the director. We may be out of time, but we have just long enough to look back and wave goodbye.

7.

Collateral

Michael Mann,
2004

Think Anybody Will Notice?

by chip

A digital slickness unmatched in the 20 years since, *Collateral* is where Michael Mann's eye extends beyond the future and into an eternal present. Watching both Foxx and Cruise go toe-to-toe and command the screen on two ends of the spectrum is exactly what the movies are all about. Star power is key in this industry and it seems like Mann knew this better than any contemporary director at the time. Allowing both of these talents to occupy a dichotomy of excellence is where *Collateral* succeeds where lesser movies would fizzle out. A picture so rooted in precision but leaving the door open for an apparition. Where else are we captivated by a seemingly uninvited coyote in the downtown streets of LA? No where. That's what Mann movies are for. Creating a reality that we're invested in beyond choice. Collateral is the 21st Century crown jewel on a headpiece littered with gemstones that could wreck the global economy.

6.

Memories of Murder

Bong Joon-Ho, 2017

Bong Hit

by Logan

Bong Joon Ho's sophomore feature film Memories of Murder is many things. First and foremost, it's an intriguing neo-noir detective story about the investigation and manhunt for a serial killer haunting the countryside of South Korea. As dark as the story is, it also contains the great humor and social satire that Joon Ho would become famous for, making the police into an inept laughing stock as they're shown torturing innocent citizens and making little headway in their investigation. The humor slowly fades as the film boils to a climax, and it ends on a soul-crushing note that is sure to leave you speechless. This is a film that I've come back to several times, and I know I'll continue to revisit it over the years. Memories of Murder is not only Bong Joon Ho's finest film, it's one of the best of this century.

5.

Speed Racer

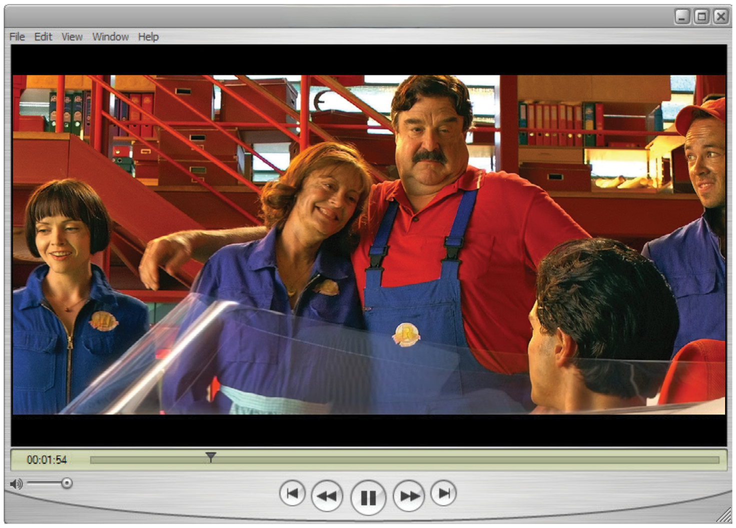
Lily & Lana Wachowski,
2008

Pop Art In Motion

by chip

The Wachowski Sisters' Magnum Opus, Speed Racer (2008) is pure visual candy. Watching this movie, whether it's the first time or the most recent of several viewings, never ceases to strike awe. It's the Stargate sequence on steroids. It's Brakhage for the masses. It's bliss with none of the ignorance.

The opening montage of Speed Racer lasts about 15 minutes and in what feels like a blink of an eye, we're completely immersed in a world that both feels lived in and beyond comprehension. A world where the incredible is available around every corner. Colors unimaginable are presented almost with mundanity. The Wachowskis know exactly what they're doing, setting the baseline at the peak.



In the more than 100 years of cinema before Speed Racer, the medium was simply working up the courage. Finally we were gifted the greatest assault on the senses, maximalism at its most obscene, a grotesquely seductive masterpiece that maintains enough courtesy to allow the entire family to enjoy it. Speed Racer is modernity perfected. A picture that exists beyond the confines of the screen on which it was born.

4.

There Will Be Blood

Paul Thomas Anderson, 2007

He Was The Chosen One

by Dev

I've been ruminating over the past several weeks on what I want to say about *There Will Be Blood* and I've been struggling to put my thoughts into words that I feel thoroughly convey my love for this film. I've run through dozens of snappy adjectives and witty epithets, but after thinking more and more about my experience with the film and what truly grabs me about it, I've decided on this. *There Will Be Blood* is quite possibly the most exhilarating experience I've ever had with a movie. Now, exhilaration might not be someone's first thought on a movie that opens with a 15 minute wordless sequence of a man falling into a well and is then both figuratively and quite literally baptized in oil, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

The opening serves as a sort of mini-story prologue that perfectly establishes the character of Daniel Plainview and the movie's essential thematic elements in a manner that's so effortless that I've seen very few other films even come close to matching it. You simply cannot talk about There Will Be Blood without mentioning Daniel Day-Lewis' performance, and there's an obvious reason for that. I think if it's not flat out a candidate for one of the greatest on-screen performances, then it's absolutely a candidate, and front runner I might add, for best of the 2000s.

Paul Dano's Eli Sunday somehow manages to live up to Day-Lewis, and at his best challenge him for the most commandeering and larger than life character on life screen. Every scene these two share together, which I'd say is realistically probably only around a quarter or third of the actual runtime, feels like an intellectual and sometimes quite physical battle and absolutely spellbinding drama. Daniel and Eli are two sides of the same coin - two charlatans who think they're smarter than everybody around them and deserve everything and anything they desire.

I could go on and on about what else exhilarates me about *There Will Be Blood* - like the masterful Jonny Greenwood score that adds a sense of forward momentum and a sort of ticking clock counting down to disaster at every moment, or the gorgeous cinematography by Robert Elswit adding a delicious sense of grit and grime to the picture (as every good western should) while still managing to capture the beauty of the California landscape, but if I did I'm not sure I'd know where to stop. I'll leave my thoughts here, if you somehow haven't seen this film which I'd argue is one of the most significant pieces of art since the turn of the century, then make it your utmost priority to change that. *There Will Be Blood* exhilarates me in a way no other film has and depending on my mood, is in the running for my all time favorite movie.

3.

In The Mood For Love

Wong Kar-Wai,
2000

Luscious, Distant Cinema

by kermit

Considered by many to be Wong Kar-wai's best film, In the Mood for Love presents a tale of lost love in an almost voyeuristic manner. The camera is consistently placed close enough to hear, but far enough to feel uninvited. We as the audience are intruders, outsiders who lack context. Mr. Chow and Mrs. Chan play act their partner's infidelity, searching for answers, finding none, yet bonding through their shared trauma. They seek answers without confrontation, retreating to the comfort of each other. In the end, no answers are given. They part ways and move on with their lives. What's happened is gone, all that remains is a secret whispered into stone, sealed with mud. A story of two lonely souls brought together for a moment, and nothing more. As one viewer describes it,

"We can but flirt with permanence."
-Jejune

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2.

No Country for Old Men

Joel & Ethan Coen, 2007

That’s The Way It Is

by Matt

A culmination of everything brothers Joel and Ethan Coen have cooked up in their careers. Neo-western tinges, bleak noir tendencies, black comedy strokes, and a taste for absurdism. *No Country for Old Men*, on paper, is the stereotypical crime-thriller Americana: a deal gone wrong, an unsuspecting Everyman, a brutal hitman, all of these tropes lined up for popcorn pulp but the Coens (and McCarthy) weave something here that weighs heavy in the chest. Despite the density of the story being told here, it’s crafted deeply in minimalism: no score, light on the dialogue, no cinematography that calls for your attention. It’s all the characters. Replacing the music is the dragging of feet on linoleum floors and the light squeals of fluorescent bulbs. Instead of explanation of the plot and characters like lesser crime stories, it’s hidden in the shadows for the audience to ponder the almost Lovecraftian motivations of someone like Javier Bardem’s Anton Chigurh. To me, *No Country* is the most American film ever made; unexplainable evilness, cruelty, fear, and greed you can’t run from no matter how many miles of infertile Texas soil you get between it and yourself. It would be easy to end this with a certain Nietzsche quote about staring into abysses but I’ll end it with this: A perfect mirror of our corrupt and deformed 21st century.

1. Mulholland Drive

David Lynch, 2001

This Is The Girl

by sludge

Mulholland Drive was born as a rejected tv pilot and David Lynch tied the burned threads he originally laid into one of the most discussed works in this century of film. A great mystery sinks its hooks with simple questions. “Who is she?” “What’s in the box?” “How is this all connected?” Blinded by the need for answers, the road only keeps winding. The closer it feels like you get to the truth, the heavier the fog gets. This structure isn’t unfamiliar but the way it reveals itself and Naomi Watts’ break out performance as a girl with a dream make *Mulholland Drive* stick as an unforgettable experience in film. Bright and magical but always feels like something is hidden behind the lights. A buzz in the dense quiet that makes you feel in your gut that something is wrong. Angelo Badalamenti’s score, Peter Deming’s cinematography, and Mary Sweeney’s edit all work together with Lynch to create a unique atmosphere that makes even walking to the back of a diner in broad daylight feel like a real nightmare conjured to film and turns a magic show into transcendence.

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